

[City of Salvador]

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NEGROES IN BRAZIL

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these, together with the plantations of Pernambuco, supplied a large part of the sugar for the tables of Europe.

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By 1670 Bahia was a wealthy capital boasting that her flag was known upon the seven seas. Ships from the Portuguese empire in the East called regularly on their way back to Portugal. By the early eighteenth century Bahia had grown into a city of 70,000, her commerce protected by the cross-fire of fourteen forts. Six- and seven-story buildings were common; the possession of carved ebony furniture had become a symbol of social standing; silks, palanquins, and the finest porcelain were imported from China. In the surrounding cane fields toiled, it is estimated, ten times as many slaves as in Virginia. A century later, Lindley, an English smuggler, after admiring the abundance of gold jewelry worn by the women of Bahia, looked out over the shipping in the harbor and wrote of "a degree of wealth unknown in Europe."

Bahia continued to be the first commercial city of Brazil until about 1830,³ when she finally yielded front rank to São Paulo, the rising young metropolis to the south. But during the entire colonial period (1549-1822), Bahia possessed the principal Brazilian firms and the largest Brazilian fortunes.

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During the first two centuries of the colonial era, Bahia was the seat of Portuguese control in Brazil, the official residence of high functionaries representing the Portuguese crown. Even after the government was transferred to Rio (1763), Bahia continued to play a prominent role in the politics of the colony and, subsequent to independence

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³ In 1868, although the decline in sugar production was by that time well advanced, Bahia had 311 *engenhos* producing nearly 19,000 tons of sugar a year.